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ABSTRACT

A random survey of 147 U.S. community colleges, of which 37 replied, resulted in a general conclusion that very little that is innovative is taking place in community college student affairs. The survey was conducted as part of a seminar in junior college student personnel services at California State College, Los Angeles. Innovative programs were defined as those having activity levels beyond those accepted as standard in the areas of educational, vocational, and personal counseling; records and registration; student health; placement; housing; financial aid; freshman orientation; remedial services; and co-curricular activities. Examples of innovative programs now in progress at 10 community colleges were reviewed and their main points elaborated on. From this review the seminar group formulated five recommendations for programs to be incorporated into student personnel services: (1) direct contact with freshmen who are not attaining satisfactory grades at mid-term; (2) continuous registration at the campus and mobile registration in the community; (3) "The Individual in a Changing Environment" should be a required course for all entering students; (4) the Study Skills Self-Learning Device should be made universally available; and (5) the services of an actuation center as developed at Chaffey College should be offered. (AL)

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WHAT IS INNOVATIVE IN COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENT AFFAIRS?

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"What is innovative in community college student affairs?" "Very little", according to a course project survey conducted by a group at California State College, Los Angeles.

The seminar in Junior College Student Personnel Services, California State College, Los Angeles, conducted a survey of community colleges seeking to identify "innovative" programs in Student Personnel Services. In order to define "innovative", it was decided to first determine what was considered common or expected. Standard programs were assumed to include Educational, Vocational and Personal Counseling; Records and Registration; Student Health; Placement; Housing; Financial Aid; Freshman Orientation; Remedial Services; and Co-Curricular Activities.

Thus, services beyond those considered "standard" became "innovative", as well as "standard" services being expanded beyond their normal boundaries. For example, if registration for college courses was taken to the student at their homes by use of mobile registration units, it was considered "innovative". If remedial services were enforced and expanded through the recruitment of high achieving members of the student's peer group as teaching aids, that, too, was "innovative". If a student actually worked in the business community and received course credit, it was "innovative", and not traditional.

The members of the seminar consisted of students working towards their Student Personnel Services credentials who had an awareness of the problems and confinements of existing systems and were looking to new approaches to respond to the varied real needs of student populations.

The states covered by the survey were Arizona, California, Florida, Hawaii, Michigan, Missouri, New York, New Jersey, Ohio, Texas and Washington. A standard letter was drafted to Community Colleges in these eleven states, selected at random, inquiring about their innovative programs in Student Personnel Services. The term "innovative" was not defined. It was left to their judgement to determine what they felt would be new and different. A total of 147 letters were sent to individual Community Colleges; thirty-seven replies were received.

Of particular interest to the members of the seminar was the breadth of the responses. These ranged from "we do not have any job openings at the present time but will keep your application on file," (which was way off target) to very complete, detailed and descriptive information about an innovation practice.

An early impression, as the responses filtered in, was that little beyond the ordinary occurred when the instructional program had not taken the lead. In essence, our assumption was that: unless the college environment was creative, imaginative and enthusiastic about change, most community college services for students outside the classroom were low key, adjustive and conjunctive programs which were quite supportive of students, but lacked verve, excitement and relevance to many of the current concerns and involvements of students.

To illustrate, let us review a select group of programs we considered as "innovative"--Tallahassee Community College, Tallahassee, Florida, informed the seminar of their concept of student government which they call the SEC, Students' Executive Council. Quoting from their Constitution, "The purpose of this organization is to provide students with an active voice in the administration and legislation of matters concerning the student body at large, to provide for good citizenship, to build campus morale, and to facilitate campus communications and direction through an experience in democratic living which is characterized by responsible communication and cooperative endeavor among students, faculty, administrators, and other officials, and through total and meaningful student participation."

The effectiveness of the SEC was tested recently by a confrontation with the faculty. The problem was blown out of proportion, the SEC made a final stand and after approaching the President of the College and the Board of Trustees of the school, the President and the Board ruled in their favor and thus recognized the SEC as a governing body on campus. The issue concerned itself with an interpretation of the SEC Constitution dealing with elections and the selection of faculty representatives.

Pensacola Junior College had made a study of freshmen who received

unsatisfactory grades at mid-term of their first semester. The study consisted of a letter to the parents and an appointment date for the student for counseling. Seventy-five percent of the students kept their appointment and of those who kept their appointment, 68% showed increased grade-point averages. (Fifty-six percent of those who did not keep their appointment showed an increase.) They are considering continuing the study with the Fall '72 class.

At St. Petersburg Junior College, the term "Outreach Center" has been developed. Originally, this was designed as a meeting place for culturally distinct students with academic potential and a place where students could receive tutorial and other special services in a familiar atmosphere within their own community. After only two years of operation, they have redefined their efforts, intensifying the community involvement phase of the program. They have six centers in operation, staffed by volunteers and paid employees. These centers perform a support function to the Students' College Program by providing needed counseling, tutorial and other special services. In addition to counseling and tutoring, they have found these centers are valuable in recruiting students for the college who would not normally avail themselves of their educational opportunities.

An experimental approach to orientation for Junior College students was reported by Santa Fe Junior College in Gainesville, Florida. They have a course entitled, "The Individual in a Changing Environment," and is required of all entering students. It is a course in introspection; the experience of the student is the subject matter. It provides each student with an opportunity to examine his values, attitudes, beliefs, and abilities, and an opportunity to examine how these and other factors effect the quality

of his relationships with others. This course is a result of work done by the student personnel staff at Central Florida Junior College when the Santa Fe President and Dean of Students were located there. The "Individual in a Changing Environment" is taught by a staff of highly competent counselors and has a significant influence on the development of a campus climate which is comfortable for all students. The students find they can identify with the college through this course, they find they are part of a college that cares.

Kauai Community College has four areas of interest in their student services program: Services to the Disadvantaged; Summer Vocational Exploration Program; Vocational Education Research Program; and Services to Foreign Students. Services to the Disadvantaged seeks to determine the type of services which will meet the needs of their multi-ethnic island community. Counseling and tutoring are the present main effort, and they hope to expand into a Learning Center responsible for developing instructional approaches for remediation. The Summer Vocational Exploration Program exposes students to five vocational areas. The target population is disadvantaged students, drop-outs and near drop-outs with the hope of expanding to include others who are uncertain of their vocational objective. Placement and evaluation of the program in vocational education is the goal of the Vocational Education Research Program. Services to Foreign students are designed to meet the special needs of this group of students. Special orientation sessions are held to aid in the acculturation process.

Two innovative programs were reported by Maple Woods Community College of Kansas City, Missouri. They have developed a Student Handbook which includes pictures of key personnel that students should be familiar

with in areas of which they may have questions or need help. Also, they are making available to students a Study Skills Self-Learning Device. This will be a sound and slide system which a student will plug into and use on an individual basis. An example they give is a program on "How To Study for a Test." Counselors will use this as a tool to help students having academic problems.

Design for Excellence is the title of a brochure sent in by the Public Relations Director of the State Board for Community College Education of the State of Washington. The brochure indicates innovative programs such as continuous registration, registration by mail and telephone, "curb-stone counseling" via a mobil counseling office, funding of a minority affairs program seeking a comprehensive approach to all the needs of the minority student, and a project titled "A Comparison of the Characteristics of the Community College Students Enrolled in Vocational, Technical, and Academic Programs."

Southwestern Michigan College, Dowagiac, Michigan, has a program called T.O.C. (Testing, Orientation, Counseling). This is scheduled during the summer months for all new entering students. It is a one-day affair; and gives them the opportunity to gather additional data about the student, discuss his goals and plans, orient him with the college, and arrange a tentative schedule of classes.

An Actuation Center is operating at Chaffey College in Alta Loma, California. This Center is for people who wish to better themselves and is run by people the student can talk with like a neighbor. "It is for people of all colors who desire more education but believe college is beyond their economic reach. It is for those who are longing for a new beginning,

a fresh approach, a right direction." Its goals are to recruit students, to involve the community with the college, to provide students financial aid and keep more students from dropping out by building their confidence and guiding them to a successful college experience.

These programs demonstrate the recognition by the Community College population of the important role they will play in the future. For example, in the State of California, the enrollment in community colleges has doubled over the past five years and is expected to grow between ten and fifteen percent next year. Eighty-two percent of all students in the first two years of higher education, public and private, in California are in community colleges.

Our group was concerned with the positive reaction to constituent needs on the part of a community college. A potential or new student needs to know what courses to take, what activities are available, who the best teachers are, the directions of various academic following, etc. The student who is flunking out needs to be identified and helped. The lonely needs friends. The aimless student needs direction. The poor student needs strength in weak areas. All students need people who are interested in them and their welfare.

Accordingly, the seminar recommends to those interested in Student Personnel Services that they seriously consider adding to their program at least the five services in the following areas:

1. Direct contact with freshmen who are not attaining satisfactory grades at mid-term.
2. Continuous registration at the campus and mobile registration in the community.
3. "The Individual in a Changing Environment" as a required course for all entering students.

4. The Study Skills Self-Learning Device.

5. An Actuation Center as developed at Chaffey College.

Further, we suggest consideration of the organizational structure of the Student Personnel Department and the possibility of the structure's negative effect on innovation and communications. A working example of an innovative organization structure was furnished by Pima College of Tucson, Arizona. Rather than the traditional line-staff organization, they have "Decision Centers." These centers are the basic working units of the college and are composed of a Center Coordinator, Staff and Pima College Community members. The stated purpose of the structure is to enable Pima College to have a common, open operating procedure and policy. It is important to note that students are involved in every decision center and thus have a direct line of communication and representation with each function of the college.

In summary, it is apparent any Student Personnel Services department, or subdivision thereof, can be innovative in the conduct of their responsibilities to the students and the community. Certainly, the traditional services of Orientation, Records and Registration, Counseling and Advising, Student Activities, Placement, Housing and Financial Aid should form the framework of the department. But, to effectively function to meet the <u>needs</u> of the students, the staff should always strive to ignore the obvious and search for the obscure. It is finding and meeting the obscure requirements of the present and potential student that makes the Community College deserve the word "community" in its name.

Addresses of community colleges reported on in this article are:

Tallahassee Community College, 444 Appleyard Drive, Tallahassee, Florida, 32304

Pensacola Junior College, Pensacola, Florida 32504

St. Petersburg Junior College, Clearwater Campus, Clearwarter, Florida 33515

Santa Fe Junior College, 723 West University Avenue, Gainesville, Florida 32601

Kauai Community College, R.R.1, Box 216, Lihue, Hawaii 96766

Maple Woods Community College, 2601 Barry Road, N.E., Kansas City North, Missouri 64119

State Board for Community College Education, Post Office Box 1666, Olympia, Washington 98501

Southwestern Michigan College, Cherry Grove Road Dowagiac, Michigan 49047

Chaffey College, 5885 Haven Avenue, Alta Loma, California 91701

Pima College, 2202 West Anklam Road, Tucson, Arizona 85709

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